

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

.. . . .

-- PUBLIC HEARING --

IN THE MATTER OF:)

)

Las Americas Aspira Academy)

.. . . .

Department of Education
The Townsend Building
401 Federal Street
Dover, Delaware

Tuesday, January 25, 2011
5:00 p.m.

.. . . .

BEFORE: John Carwell
Patricia Bigelow

ATTORNEY: John Hindman, DAG

.. . . .

-- Transcript of Proceedings --

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1 MR. CARWELL: I think I'm going to get started.

2 Is everyone signed in?

3 MS. LOPEZ-WAITE: I believe so.

4 MR. CARWELL: Okay. Great. Good afternoon,
5 everyone. I declare this public hearing to be open.
6 My name is John Carwell. I'm a charter school officer
7 for the Charter School Office, and I have been
8 appointed by the Secretary of Education to conduct this
9 public hearing.

10 Las Americas Aspira Academy Charter School has
11 filed an application to modify its charter. As is
12 required by law, the matter was referred to the Charter
13 School Accountability Committee for investigation and
14 report.

15 This joint public hearing is being held by the
16 Department of Education and the State Board of
17 Education to give the school an opportunity to respond
18 to the final report of the accountability committee,
19 which recommended that the school's modification be
20 approved and also to receive public comments.

21 I would like the record to reflect that the
22 notice of the time, date, and place of today's public
23 hearing was published in the News Journal and the
24 Delaware State News on November 18, 2010. In addition,



1 notice was posted at the Charter School Accountability
2 Committee's official place of business on the
3 Department of Education's official website and on the
4 State public meeting calendar on the State's official
5 website on November 18, 2010.

6 Further, Las Americas Aspira Academy Charter
7 School was personally notified of the time, date, and
8 place of today's public hearing on January 7, 2011 at
9 the final meeting of the Charter School Accountability
10 Committee.

11 A court reporter is present so that a record of
12 this hearing can be made. It will be necessary for
13 each speaker to clearly identify his or herself before
14 beginning to speak so that the court reporter will be
15 able to note who you are. The record of this hearing
16 will be provided to the Secretary of Education and
17 members of the State Board of Education, together with
18 any written or electronic comments received at or
19 before this hearing. And we have not received any
20 electronic comments to date.

21 So the order of procedure, we will proceed in
22 the following manner: First, we will hear from any
23 representatives from the charter school who wish to
24 comment on the committee's final report, and then we



1 will take comments from anybody else who desires to
2 speak.

3 There are sign-up sheets which folks have
4 signed up for if you desire to speak. If you haven't
5 signed up already, please do so. I will now pause for
6 a minute to permit anyone who desires to sign up to
7 speak, if you haven't already.

8 MS. LOPEZ-WAITE: Yes, we have.

9 MR. CARWELL: Great. May I have a show of
10 hands from all of those who desire to make any
11 comments? (All raised hands)

12 Okay. All right. Great. Great. And I have
13 directions here whether or not to impose a time limit
14 on comments, but usually it's around, what --

15 MS. LOPEZ-WAITE: They will be short.

16 MR. CARWELL: Great. Great. So I do intend,
17 you know, to be as liberal as time will allow in
18 accepting comments. However, I do reserve the right to
19 limit comments if it is clearly repetitive or
20 cumulative. At this point I will accept comments from
21 any representatives of the school.

22 MS. LOPEZ-WAITE: Okay, I will start. My name
23 is Margie Lopez-Lee. I am the head of the school and
24 also one of the founders of the Las Americas Aspira



1 Academy.

2 I want to thank you for considering our
3 modification request. Based on the final record
4 yesterday, we understand that your recommendation is to
5 approve it, so we are grateful for that.

6 I do want to make just one comment for the
7 record, that in the background information of the
8 report it states that we had submitted enrollment
9 numbers late last year, and that that is definitely an
10 inaccuracy.

11 The enrollment information was provided via
12 Excel, and then also the majority of them were entered
13 into E-School by the deadline. Unfortunately, we had a
14 system constraint that did not allow us to complete all
15 the entries into E-School. Therefore, after talking to
16 the Department, we had agreed that the Excel
17 spreadsheet would suffice.

18 So I just want to go on record, and hopefully
19 that one statement can be omitted from the report.
20 Aside from that, the report is fine.

21 And I have had the opportunity to address this
22 committee several times. I just wanted to hand it over
23 to our guests. Evelyn is a parent. And then they can
24 go through the introductions from there.



1 MS. DIAZ: Yes, hello. My name is Evelyn Diaz,
2 and I'm a parent. And this is my daughter. She will
3 be in first grade next year.

4 I am very excited about this. I am, of course,
5 bilingual. And, unfortunately, my daughter -- I have
6 three children. My two other children are bilingual
7 because they go back and forth to Puerto Rico and here.
8 Unfortunately, she is not as fluent as I would like her
9 to be. And I think this course to be an amazing
10 opportunity because, not only is she going to be able
11 to speak the language, which she does somewhat; she
12 will also be able to read and write, which I'm very
13 excited about. You know, a lot of us do know how to
14 speak, but we don't know how to read and write it. So
15 I'm very excited to give her that opportunity and to
16 prepare her even more so for her future.

17 And I would like to thank you, as well, for
18 giving us the opportunity to have such an innovative
19 program available to our kids.

20 MR. CARWELL: Thank you for your comments.

21 MS. LOPEZ-WAITE: We have one person who would
22 like to say it in Spanish, and then I can translate.
23 Will that be okay? It's a bilingual school. I guess
24 we need to become accustomed to that.



1 MS. REINA: (Speaking in Spanish)

2 MS. LOPEZ-WAITE: She is here. She was invited
3 here to speak because she was made aware of the fact
4 that we are opening up this bilingual school.

5 Her two daughters are bilingual.
6 Unfortunately, her grandchildren are not bilingual, and
7 she would like for them to become bilingual.

8 And she is here to lend her support for the
9 school and for the modification request. I'm very
10 excited that she chose to start.

11 MS. LOPEZ: My name is Maria Lopez. My
12 grandson is going to be going to the school. He was
13 going to be here, but he has got the flu. And I
14 support the school. I had kids here, and I wish we had
15 this a long time ago. We needed it. And I support it.
16 Thank you.

17 MR. CARWELL: Thank you for your comment.

18 MR. WHITE: I'm Walter White, a cousin of
19 Margie's. And I'm retired on active duty in Reserves.
20 I was in the Reserves and in Public Health for five
21 years. I worked for the WIC Program, the HIV Program,
22 and Tuberculosis, in Newark and Wilmington.

23 And it was necessary for us to be there and to
24 have a school for bilinguals. And I would like to see



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1 that. I have a son in Smyrna who is taking an online
2 to learn Spanish also. It will be nice to have this
3 school.

4 MR. CARWELL: Thank you for your comments.

5 MS. MARTINEZ: Good evening. First of all,
6 thank you all for having us this evening. My name is
7 Jissell Martinez, and I currently -- I am a board
8 member that's on the board for the charter school, and
9 I currently work as the associate fiscal policy analyst
10 at the Office of Management and Budget, which
11 previously was Criminal Justice Council.

12 And I just wanted to be here to show my full
13 support for not only the charter school, but for the
14 modification request that we have presented to you.

15 And I definitely see a need for a school that
16 provides dual language learning opportunities, not just
17 for kids in elementary school but in the future also,
18 for those in middle school and high school, as well.
19 So thank you very much.

20 MR. CARWELL: Thank you for your comments.

21 MR. CAMACHO: Hi. My name is George Camacho.
22 I'm the chairperson of the Governor's Advisory Council
23 on Hispanic affairs. Basically, I represent all the
24 council members who are in support of this school.



1 The members of the council represent the
2 Hispanic community throughout the state, and I echo all
3 the sentiments and support that everyone has basically
4 stated already.

5 I'm also with the Delaware State Police. I'm a
6 community liaison in Georgetown, which is a large,
7 pretty large populated Hispanic area.

8 One of the things about the charter school,
9 obviously, you know that the student-to-teacher ratio
10 is a lot smaller than the bigger schools. And that
11 kind of education is needed because in the bigger
12 schools, for the most part, a lot of students, Hispanic
13 students and others, are pretty much left behind, where
14 you have a school like this which gives almost
15 individualized attention to students as needed. And
16 it's going to help out with the dropout rate in high
17 school.

18 Plus, with respect to the climate, the
19 discipline climate, this school's structure has a
20 structured discipline program where, you know, they are
21 not going to be tolerant to a lot of the things that
22 goes on in the bigger schools. They are going to have
23 some rules that folks are going to have to follow.

24 So I think that the State of Delaware is going



1 to benefit from a school like this. I think that --
2 Well, I'm pretty sure that the quality of citizens of
3 students that come out of this school are going to
4 benefit the state in the long run.

5 MR. CARWELL: Thank you for your comments, sir.
6 Mr. Camacho, did you have a chance to sign in?

7 MR. CAMACHO: Yes, sir, I did.

8 MR. CARWELL: Great. Thank you. It seems
9 there is no one else to speak. If not, I want to thank
10 you all for participating today. The Secretary will
11 consider your comments in deciding what recommendation
12 to impose for the consent of the State Board, and this
13 hearing is now closed. Thank you all.

14 (Concluded at 5:17 p.m.)
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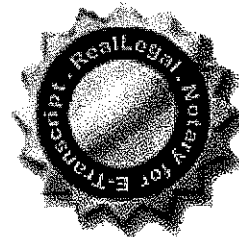
CERTIFICATE

I, Lorena J. Hartnett, a Notary Public and Registered Professional Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing is an accurate and complete transcription of the proceeding held at the time and place stated herein, and that the said proceeding was recorded by me and then reduced to typewriting under my direction, and constitutes a true record of the testimony given by said witnesses.

I further certify that I am not a relative, employee, or attorney of any of the parties or a relative or employee of either counsel, and that I am in no way interested directly or indirectly in this action.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal of office on this 27th day of January 2011.


Lorena J. Hartnett



Registered Professional Reporter

